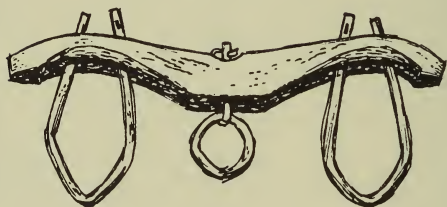


JOSEPH  
MEDILL

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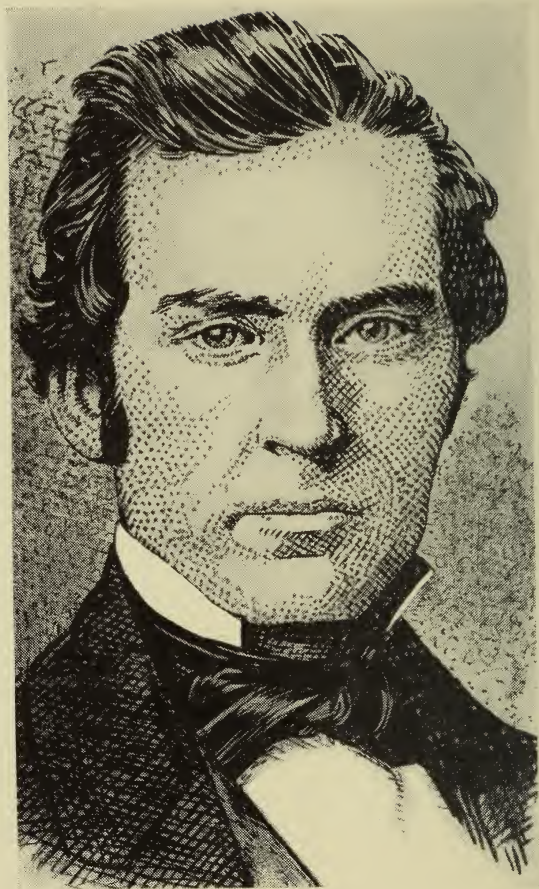
JOSEPH MEDILL







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# JOSEPH MEDILL



A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY  
AND AN APPRECIATION

1847 - THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE - 1947

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# INTRODUCTION

"No man of his time exercised a more decisive—or on the whole—a more beneficial influence on public affairs than Mr. Medill."

Thus another Chicago newspaper, at the time of his death in March, 1899, expressed itself in paying tribute to Joseph Medill, who while not the founder of the Chicago Tribune, laid the foundations of its character and success.

In the pages which follow, the reader will find an account of some of the achievements and events in the life of a man who was not only a great editor, an editor of the times that gave us Greeley, Raymond and Dana, but who was, in even larger measure, a great American.

Joseph Medill's contributions to journalism, and to the moral, political and economic progress of his country, will be seen as inevitable products of his leading characteristics; his innate feeling for the qualities which made a newspaper great; his unshatterable courage; his intense patriotism; his

clear-eyed vision, and, perhaps his most notable trait, his sturdy common sense.

Time has not changed earlier estimates of Joseph Medill. It is wholly fitting that the two studies of him which appeared in 1923 and in 1929 be republished as the Chicago Tribune, whose activities he directed for forty-four years, commemorates its hundredth anniversary.

JOSEPH  
MEDILL:

# THE MAN



A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED AS A BOOKLET IN 1929





HALF a century of Joseph Medill's long life was given to journalism.

He was of the times and the type of Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett the elder, William Cullen Bryant and Cassius M. Clay, with each of whom he enjoyed a friendship that in the case of Greeley amounted to an admiring intimacy. Today, three decades after his death, his fame as editor and publicist is attested and sustained by the aggressive life of the newspaper of which he was editor—the "Chicago Tribune."

As citizen, patriot and political seer, Joseph Medill is worthy of a reputation matching his renown in the newspaper world. He served Chicago as mayor just after the great fire of 1871, instituting reforms that still endure. He was a confidant and adviser to Lincoln. He had a wide influence in developing the Illinois Constitution of the early seventies, which still stands. Two Presidents offered him cabinet posts in vain. And he undoubtedly gave the Republican party its name and aided vastly

in its organization.

He came of this kind of stock. It was Scotch-Irish—hardy, tenacious, active, industrious. From the time of his great-grandfather his family had been shipbuilders in the Belfast yards.

His father, William Medill, immigrated to this country in 1819, settling in an area then supposed to belong to the United States, but awarded to Canada by the Ashburton treaty of 1842. At a village near St. John, in the present province of New Brunswick, Joseph Medill was born on April 6, 1823. That he was not born on the soil of the country he so greatly served is said to have been a whimsical vexation to him in his maturity.

When he was nine years old his parents moved to Stark County, Ohio, and in the district school and the academy of that region their son got his schooling and worked on the farm. His father was neither rich nor rugged, and besides two sisters there were three younger brothers whose

upbringing devolved in some measure upon the oldest boy.

He was in the midst of preparation for college when misfortune by fire befell the family, and Joseph closed his books and went directly about the business of life. This he had determined would be the law.

In 1846 he was admitted to the bar and formed a partnership with George McIlvaine of New Philadelphia, who at the time of his death some years ago was Chief Justice of Ohio. Many of the young men with whom Mr. Medill was associated in the practice of law in those pioneer days attained national prominence, including John A. Bingham, United States Minister to Japan; Chief Justice Chase; Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War during the rebellion, and George E. Pugh, United States Senator from Ohio.

Instinct, more than design, turned young Medill aside from this career of the law into the paths of journalism. He was a friend of the local editor, whose office was

the rendezvous for bright young men of the town. In this atmosphere Medill caught the smell of printer's ink, which, he once remarked, once inoculated into the human system, possesses its victim until death. He learned to set type and work a hand press, at first for fun—then seriously.

Almost before he knew it he was a printer and editor. He had found his forte. Then fate conspired to point the way for him a bit further. At Coshocton, Ohio, in 1849, the "Coshocton Whig" was for sale. His three younger brothers were growing up without a career, and a newspaper in the family would supply that defect. He found the means to purchase the "Whig," renamed it the "Republican," and made his three younger brothers his assistants.

From that time on, the "Republican" waxed stormy in the cause of human freedom—and influential. With its aid the Whigs carried the county, which had always been Democratic. It is probable that the outcome of the campaign following his

purchase of the paper was the determining factor in Medill's subsequent decision not to resume the law.

In his own language, "the law lingered a little while to reclaim the recusant, but he had tasted the delights of Franklin's nectar, and he never returned."

Franklin, practical, sensible, visioned, was his hero. In youth, in maturity and in old age he revered the life and works of his predecessor in the publishing field. Chicago today owns a statue of the scientist, statesman and printer, standing in Lincoln Park, that was presented to the city by Joseph Medill.

Two years after acquiring the "Republican," he sold it and removed to Cleveland. There he used the purchase price and other funds to establish a morning paper, politically of the Whig persuasion, which was called the "Daily Forest City." A year later he consolidated it with a Free Soil journal and named it the "Cleveland Leader." As such, it flourished for nearly seventy years.

With a national political crisis impending, the perspicuity of the editor began to assert itself. He found Northern Ohio divided into three factions—Whig, Free Soil, and Democratic. A Whig by education and a radical by sentiment, he set out to unite the Free Soil and the Whig units, a mammoth task in which he succeeded only partly.

The following summer, when the convention to nominate a candidate for governor of Ohio was held, the radical and conservative wings of the Whig party divided it against itself. The Democratic nominee was elected by a vote of two to one, and the Whig party in Ohio was at an end.

Tacitly accepting the demise of the Whig party as final, and preferring to look forward instead of backward, Medill's next move was to address letters to the leaders of the disorganized party, asking if they would assist in the formation of a new Republican party on the ruins of the old Whig organization.

First of all he wrote to Horace Greeley.

The reply was destroyed in the great fire of 1871. In its place Mr. Medill retained only such a version as his tenacious memory could supply. Greeley wrote in effect:

“Go ahead, my friend, with your proposed Republican party and God bless you. I hope you will have the best of luck. The time has indeed come to bury our beloved party; it is dead. But we have many fool friends who insist it is only in a comatose state and will recover, but I tell them it is dead—still, I dare not yet in New York announce the demise of a party and call for the organization of a new one. But do you go ahead on the Western Reserve and commence the work. I like the name for it (Republican). If you can get the name Republican started in the West it will grow in the East. I fully agree to the new name and the new christening.”

Various comments were received from other leaders, some approving, others disapproving the movement. The latter, however, were much in the minority. Some were editors in Pennsylvania, others in western states. None of those desiring the change, however, had the courage to take the initiative.

With matters in this state, Mr. Medill called a meeting at his own office in the "Cleveland Leader," one night in March, 1854, of leading men of the three parties—Free Soil, Whig, and Democrat. About twenty men responded. The summons was in a measure secret, and addressed only to men he believed he could trust.

At the meeting he disclosed his object and frankly broached the proposition to organize a new party out of the elements represented at the meeting, and name it the "Republican party." Discussion was lively, chiefly concerning the name. Mr. Chase was known to be opposed to it, and won over several men to his view.

About midnight a vote was taken, and two-thirds of those present assented to the Medill plan, which was reduced to form in some such fashion as this:

Name of the new party: Republican.

Platform: No more slave states; no more slave territory; resistance to pro-slavery aggression; slavery is sectional; liberty is



national.

This platform was written in part by Mr. Medill, in part by Rufus Spaulding, and the last two clauses by John C. Vaughan. This has been set down as the beginning of the Republican party. The first meeting and its objects and performances were to be kept secret, and another larger, public meeting was planned for the end of that month—March, 1854. Before that time, however, the name "Republican" had spread over the West, and meetings were held in various towns advocating the new party and the new name.

Out of them all rose a discordant clamor claiming the honor of the birthplace of the party.

"It is not strictly true," Mr. Medill said on one occasion, "that we were first to announce in public the new party and the new name; but it is a fact that none of the other meetings in any state antedated our little gathering in the 'Leader' office in March, 1854."

In the winter of 1854-55, Captain J. D. Webster, afterwards General Webster and chief of Grant's staff at Shiloh, called on the Cleveland editor. He owned an interest in the "Chicago Tribune" and was in need of a managing editor. He persuaded Medill to visit Chicago and look over the field.

From the finished elegance of the Cleveland of that day to the turmoil of the prairie metropolis proved a considerable change for the young Ohioan, but he liked it, because he foresaw a great city to be built on the quagmire on the lake—and that in his own day. He purchased an interest in the "Tribune."

Announcement of the accession to the position of editor and publisher of the "Tribune" by Joseph Medill, and the retirement of Thomas A. Stewart, who had been associated with the paper from its origin, and had also worked on its predecessor, the "Gem of the Prairie," was contained in the issue of July 21, 1855. Stewart, whose resignation was necessitated by failing health,

died three years later.

Medill disposed of his interest in the "Cleveland Leader" to Edwin Cowles, brother of Alfred Cowles, who came to Chicago with him in the position of bookkeeper. About a year later Cowles purchased a one-third interest in the "Tribune." Dr. Charles H. Ray of Galena owned a similar share, Mr. Medill forming the third of the trio directing the destinies of the paper.

He was at that time thirty-two years of age, in robust health, and constituted one-half of the entire local staff of the "Tribune." He saw the first paper off the press each morning, and was at work again at noon of the same day. Yet he found time to take an active interest in the political events which preceded the great campaign between Lincoln and Douglas in 1858, for the United States Senate.

His friendship with Lincoln was thus begun several years before the Civil War and continued to the end of the President's life. It had its inception at the convention

at Bloomington where Lincoln made his famous "lost speech." Although a delegate to the convention, Mr. Medill was present also in the capacity of a reporter. The current of events there cast Lincoln and the editor much together.

The Lincoln of those days was described as a gawky, joke-telling, ill-dressed, modest, astute country lawyer who had some business in the courts of Chicago. But outside of court hours, when he was in Chicago, Lincoln would go oftenest to the "Tribune" building, climb the stairs and sit in the editorial workshop of Mr. Medill, his feet on the edge of the editor's desk.

It was in these conferences that Mr. Medill would press upon Lincoln the duty of taking the most advanced position on any paramount issue of the time.

Mr. Medill—at the outset of the Civil War—was the first to insist that the soldier should not lose his right to vote, and the value of the soldier vote in those days was great. One of his grandsons said of him:

"He was right on Alaska, on civil service, on intervention against cruelties in Cuba, on preparedness. He was the first American to perceive the need of adequate military preparation, and he perceived it a quarter of a century before an army was needed."

In the natural order of things, the "Tribune" was an ardent champion of Lincoln in the presidential campaign of 1860.

Mr. Medill was one of the organizers of the powerful and influential Union Defense Committee, which became during the Civil War the mainstay of the government in this section. In the uncertain days when public sentiment wavered as to whether the President should be sustained in his call for troops, Joseph Medill, standing firm as the Rock of Gibraltar, was writing in the "Tribune," "The United States *is*," and spelling "nation" with a capital "N."

He was a nationalist and a believer in Alexander Hamilton. He had evidenced his feeling for the Union when at the age of eighteen, in Coshocton, he organized a company of volunteers for service in the

Mexican War. It was ready to start for the front when the victories of General Taylor made it unnecessary, and the company was mustered out without having crossed the Mexican border.

He was keenly interested in the recruiting for the Civil War, especially in the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, commanded by Colonel John F. Farnsworth, at that time member of Congress. G Company was assigned to Chicago, and was organized by Joseph Medill's brother, William, twenty of its members being enlisted from the "Tribune" office. William Medill was made captain.

After the battle of Antietam, where a younger brother, Samuel Medill, joined the company, Captain Medill was promoted to Major, and Lieutenant Hynes succeeded him as Captain of Company G. Major Medill was mortally wounded at an engagement at Williamsport, Maryland, and died in the hospital at Frederickburg.

Joseph Medill was elected to the Illinois constitutional assembly in 1870, and was

the author of the minority-representation clause.

He was deeply interested in both national and municipal service reform. He talked with General Grant before the latter had become President, and so impressed the future President with the earnestness of his convictions that when the first civil service bill was passed, providing for the appointment of a commission, Mr. Medill was made one of the commissioners. He served for a year.

When the fire of October 9, 1871, swept over Chicago, Mr. Medill's first thought was for the "Tribune." When, early in the morning following the outbreak of the blaze, he fought his way from his residence on the West Side to the office of his paper, he found the entire force at work preparing the story of the disaster to the city. Flames were burning even then, all about the "Tribune," but no one supposed the "fire-proof" Tribune building would succumb.

Fearing the blazing embers might ignite

valuable papers, however, Mr. Medill set about removing his files and other articles to a place of safety. Within a short time McVicker's theatre next door was a ruin, and the "Tribune" office ablaze.

By noon of the same day the editor was busy locating a new home for his paper. A temporary haven was located west of the river at 15 Canal Street in a ramshackle building, and with makeshift equipment the entire force, working all day and all night, succeeded in issuing the paper with the loss of only one issue.

Eight weeks after the great fire Mr. Medill took up the duties of Mayor, for which his nomination had come as a surprise. He was not present at the convention where his name was suggested and accepted, and was first informed of his nomination by a casual passerby, as he labored with his men to get in some much needed machinery at the new plant.

A committee came rushing into the office soon afterward to acquaint him with their



desires. He requested them to return to the convention and notify it that he declined the nomination. The committee replied that the convention had finished its work and adjourned.

Two days later he addressed a meeting on the West Side. He declared that under the city charter the powers of the Mayor were so restricted that he amounted only to a figurehead; that the city was run by a lot of boards of irresponsibility, independent of the Mayor and Council; and that he had concluded to accept the nomination only on condition that at its ensuing session the legislature give Chicago an amended charter conferring on the Mayor the power of appointment subject to the Council's approval, and also power of removal. The crowd shouted its endorsement, and he entered office upon those terms.

One measure of his administration was the taking of the fire department out of politics. Prior to the great fire this department had been a part of the spoils system

of office. The people had been so thoroughly scared by the fire, combined with the action of the insurance companies in threatening to leave the city without fire insurance, that spoilsmen in following administrations did not dare undo his work.

In 1874, Mr. Medill acquired by purchase a majority of the stock, carrying full control of the "Tribune." For forty-four years including the time both before and after this purchase, he was the brains and the sinews of that newspaper. He had able colleagues, some of whom were better writers than he ever became, but it was he who gave the paper its impetus and direction. It was he who made it an institution, and by it alone, save for brief periods of official service, his sound ideals of citizenship found expression and realization.

His ideal of what a newspaper should be he earnestly, laboriously and patiently brought to fulfillment, and that ideal was:

"To be the organ of no man, however high,  
no clique or ring, however influential, or

faction, however fanatical or demonstrative, and in all things to follow the line of common sense."

As a writer, in the sense of a stylist, he was not great, but he was great in character, great in vision. Not in wealth of language did he excel, but in clear, prophetic political vision.

Joseph Medill was married on September 2, 1852, to Miss Katherine Patrick, daughter of James Patrick of New Philadelphia, Ohio. Mr. Patrick was a well known citizen of the then Northwest, having been successively Indian Agent, Land Commissioner, and County Judge. He was also publisher of a Whig newspaper for twenty-three years.

Mrs. Medill's mother before her marriage was Katherine Westfall, a daughter of Major Abraham Westfall of Revolutionary fame, and a granddaughter of Colonel Peter Van Etten, who was wounded in the French and Indian War.

Mrs. Medill was born at New Philadelphia, September 25, 1831. She died at

Elmhurst, Illinois, October 1, 1894. During the war she took part in the labors of the Sanitary Commission, and later was closely identified with the Soldiers' Home. She was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church.

There were three children: Elinor, who married Robert W. Patterson of Chicago; Katherine, who married Robert S. McCormick, and Josephine, who died in Paris in 1892.

Up to the day of his death Joseph Medill was actively a factor in the publication of the "Tribune." He was in San Antonio, Texas, at the time of his last illness. The day before he died he wrote a short editorial that was taken to the telegraph office by his grandson, Robert R. McCormick, who was with him in San Antonio. It appeared in the "Tribune" the following morning, in the same issue that carried news of his death and his obituary.

He died at the Hotel Menger, San Antonio, March 16, 1899, at the age of 76.

Heart disease, from which he had suffered for some time, was the cause of death.

His last words were, "What is the news this morning?"



AN  
APPRECIATION  
BY  
JAMES  
O'DONNELL  
BENNETT



REPRINTED FROM THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
OF APRIL SIXTH, NINETEEN TWENTY-THREE





This day brings the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Joseph Medill.

For forty-four years he was the guiding mind of the "Chicago Tribune," and it is by reason of what he was that this newspaper is today what it is.

He died twenty-four years ago, but he still is a living factor in the daily councils and the large policies of the "Tribune," not because he established a hard-and-fast "Tribune" tradition, but because he created and bequeathed a "Tribune" ideal.

He is not alone an abiding influence but an abiding personality. His spare, erect figure, touched with the distinction which comes with plain living and weighty thinking, his mild but searching eyes, his decisive utterance, his quiet but commanding demeanor still are vivid, and still is he spoken of, even by the younglings of the staff, as "Mister Medill"—as though he might at any hour be coming among them with instruction or with counsel.

That the personality and the "feel" of this

man should be thus pervasive after nearly a quarter of a century, that he should seem to be going along with us in our present and forward into our future, is highly eloquent of the kind of man and mind he was. Always he lived in the present and the future. At the age of 42—an age when men of mark in our time are about ready for significant tasks—he had finished a great work in the world. That work was the sustaining of the West of his country to the burdens and griefs of the Civil War.

Thirty-four years remained to him.

They were given to new constructive work. He neither talked nor wrote about old times. His mind was not intent upon colleagues in the great struggle who had vanished or who were resting upon the oars. (This was unfortunate in a way, for it caused him to leave but a scant store of written reminiscence.) When he reached the age at which most men become anecdotal and musing, when, in other words, he had passed 60, his mind and pen were intent upon

Blaine, and McKinley, and—locally—the elder Carter Harrison, and upon our city.

He was seventy when the World's Fair came, but for him it was not a wonder-work about which the fancies and reveries of a long life might cluster, but a renewal of his youth and a call to fresh tasks.

He had passed 75 when the war against Spain was declared. He brought to the problems which its far-flung successes created the breadth of vision he had brought to the problems of the Civil War. In short, he was an expansionist, not because he believed glory on easy terms was good for his country, but because he believed that his country had a mission and that the establishment of freedom everywhere was at once the most sacred and the most practical part of that mission. Being for the war against Spain, he said so vigorously, calling those who were not for it "pusillanimous stock-jobbers." As was his wont, he called them that by name.

He was an expansionist, but also intensely

a nationalist. He did not believe his country's work in the world was to be done by calling in some other part of the world to help us do it. No publicist in America had a profounder fear of the entangling alliance. He was frankly a chauvinist. He believed that the United States was the finest country on earth, that Chicago—despite Democrats—was the finest city in that country and that the "Tribune" had more character and sense of service than any other newspaper in the world. But he knew—and that knowledge saved him from flamboyancy—that victorious chauvinism carries with it heavy obligation. If he liked to take in his newspaper the attitude of "we've-got-the-ships—we've-got-the-men—and-we've-got-the-money-too," he also was mindful to look around and insistently demand that we see that we had them. If not, get them.

As to Chicago, he always thought it big and good—though it required passionate optimism to do that when he first came among us sixty-eight years ago—but he be-

lieved in a bigger and better Chicago. In working out that ideal he bent to the immediate needs—like the task of rehabilitating a worthless fire department. That was during his term as mayor after the fire. The development of a worthy public library was another of the vital tasks to which he gave his best thought and his patient effort. The Sanitary Canal was another benefaction he forced through.

He was always hunting new ways to conquer affliction. A man who had, or thought he had, a new way to fight consumption, or kidney disease, or drunkenness found in Mr. Medill an attentive listener and, if the validity of his method were established, a liberal supporter. If he heard of a place in the far west especially salubrious for consumptives he would send afflicted persons there, paying the expense out of his own pocket. A man of very correct habits, he entered a profession which in the old days was disgraced by drunkenness, and drunkenness he came to loathe with a special loathing. Hence he

welcomed Dr. Keeley and his cure as a god-send, and he exploited both in this newspaper with a lavishness no money could have purchased. Many a man he saved to decency by sending him to the Keeley cure and many another, no doubt, was saved by the knowledge that if he did not mend his ways, Mr. Medill would pack him off to Dwight.

The reason he hated drunkenness was not alone that it was wasteful and wicked. He hated it because he hated anything that was stronger than a MAN. Whether it were a vice or a superstition or a disease or a political or social tyranny, he hated it with a slow, white equable hatred that never wore out and never gave up. One of his grandsons admitted to me just recently: "I have no doubt he would be a dry today." Another grandson said, "I am not so sure that he would be a dry today, because he was so intense an individualist that to him almost anything was better than infringement of the rights of the individual; but I am sure that whether he were a dry or a wet he would

vehemently be one or the other. There would be no doubt as to his position. He did not like puddles in thought or in legislation."

What he did for the afflicted and the weak he did from personal solicitude and in no very systematic way. He remained always so individualistic that he believed the man who helps himself is best helped. It may be that the numerous "Tribune" welfare organizations which today bear his honored name and which look after the employe in almost every economic relation of life—and death—would make him wonder whether the law of survival of the fittest were not being tampered with. His was, however, a mind readily adjusting itself to new conditions and no doubt he would see that more intricate conditions and more extensive activities demand that we now do on a system what he did from the promptings of a kind heart.

For nearly half his life Mr. Medill was a man of large means and great influence. But all his life he was simple. He was a plain liver. They used to say that he "ate what was set

before him." He was not austere, but there was a certain formalism about him that forbade a liberty. Men of this newspaper who today are men of command and of bold speech look back to the days when they were lads around him and say, "I was scared of him." At the office and at home one would ask whether it would be all right to go into the room where he was. Even so, he was unassuming, but you felt that he was unassuming because he knew he did not have to assume. He was *there*. Those who confess now that they were "afraid" of him add that it was not precisely fear either, for he never did a hard thing to any of them. What they did feel was, of course, awe of an old man of great character who had been a force in great times and to the end was still a force.

Anybody who was in doubt as to how forcible and how searching he was had but to neglect one of his instructions. Once, when the "New York Times" had reprinted a two-column article which had appeared in



the "Chicago Tribune" three weeks before, he ordered it reprinted in this newspaper, he not having seen it in his own paper, or having forgotten about it. The order was simple: "I want this article to be reprinted in the 'Tribune' tomorrow." It was not done. The next day he said, "What do you mean by neglecting my instructions?" There were hurried explanations. His reply was "Print it anyway!" He believed in discipline, and this was a case where he thought the ethics of discipline were urgent, because the infractor was a person of—next to him—the highest rank on the paper. Furthermore, another of his convictions was that anything that had been printed was news again after three weeks.

Solely in his raiment did he cling to old ways, wearing toward the end of the last century the congress gaiters, stiff, white shirt, black string tie and black frock coat of an earlier time; in summer it would be a black alpaca coat. When he became old he had a valet, not because he had grown luxurious,

but because the valet saved him bother.

He smoked one cigar a week. This indulgence afforded a more curious sidelight on his complete self-mastery than if he had not smoked at all. He never drank wine nor spirits until the time came when feeble heart action caused the doctors to prescribe for him a thimbleful of whiskey with digitalis.

His home life was beautiful; his marriage ideal. To the last day of their union he and his wife seldom addressed each other except as "Dearest." In his old age he did most of his work at home, in the stately mansion still standing at the northeast corner of Cass and Ontario Streets. There he spent his days pretty much in two rooms—the library, which was a real library, and the adjoining study, which had an open fire and an old-fashioned roll top desk. Here he wrote many editorials and dictated more. In the morning there would be a conference at the house between him and the late Robert W. Patterson, managing editor, and Alfred T. Ward, cashier, still halely and happily

with us. At these daily conferences, editorial and business matters were discussed. The late Fred Hall, editorial writer, was also frequently summoned, and the old chief would say, "Now, Fred, I want the 'Tribune' to say this—" and then he would outline a policy in general and an editorial in detail.

As a writer he was not extraordinary but as an inspirer of bold and forcible writing he was great. For himself, he stuck to the old standbys of polemics—"cowardly," "deceitful," "pusillanimous," "evasive." His exceptional gift as a publicist lay in his genius for defining issues and clearing the decks for conflict. As a thinker he was positive; he was not an embellisher of thought.

Owing to his partial deafness, his conversation in his later years was mostly monologue and questions. In the presence of a bore or a trifler his deafness became total.

He was not a recluse on the one hand nor, in the facetious phrase of his time, a "j'iner" on the other. He was an incessant reader.

No fiction; all books of history and of science. He accounted worth his time only the books that freed and enlarged the mind. Archibald Geikie's monumental work on geology was one of those, and to a 12-year-old grandson he once said, "I'll give you fifty dollars if you'll read this book."

The pap of conspicuousness which has been the bane, yea, and sometimes the undoing, of publicists, he never craved. The presidents offered him cabinet positions. It cost him no pang to decline them.

For forty years and more he exercised enormous power—influence rather—because he was the authentic and respected informant of a great community. It did not make him arrogant or heady, nor draw him outside his field, because his sole ambition was to continue to make an interesting and trustworthy newspaper. That kind of a newspaper he made for this community and for neighboring commonwealths some 15,000 times in his life, and after each of those 15,000 issues his destination was *home*.

Conspicuously placed, he did his work in the world without making a fuss about it. A less ostentatious editor never existed.

His god was Common Sense, and the plain god's gift to him was great equanimity. He could keep his head when the highest in the land were in a state of panic. He suffered terribly during the Civil War, but he maintained a front of calm, and he maneuvered steadily to the end that panic should not become rout. His wisdom of compromise and extenuation in some matters to the end that the supreme matter should not be sacrificed is the explanation of acts and utterances of his which, at the time of them, many persons could not understand. This extract from a letter which he wrote (to A. S. Hill) in the dark days of 1863, before Vicksburg and Gettysburg had revived the fainting heart of the North, illustrates the sagacity and the equanimity which he—a hurried, worried editor, a vehement party man (he was one of the twelve founders of the Republican party) and a zealous patriot

—could muster in a time of desolating crisis:

“Our view is that we ought to do all we can to strengthen the hands of the administration until the crisis is past . . . An awful responsibility rests upon our party. If it carries the war to a successful close, the people will continue it in power. If it fails, all is lost, union, party, cause, freedom, and abolition of slavery. Hence we sustain Chase and his National Bank scheme, Stanton and his impulsiveness, Welles and his senility, and Lincoln and his slowness. Let us first get the ship out of the breakers; then court-martial the officers if they deserve it.”

It should be remembered that that was the utterance of a man of only forty years.

All the easy ways to favor and to fortune he abjured for himself and for the newspaper whose greatness he founded. Independence of the demands of faction, service to city and country, and adherence to common sense were the foundation stones of sound journalism in his ideal of the craft, and, as to the structure's adornment, if what was important was not always interesting, what was interesting was, in his notion, always important. That is why his news-

paper was, and continues to be, always human. In a sentence that he left us as a legacy, and that has since become a classic among newspaper-makers, he epitomized his ideal of a newspaper when he said that he wanted the "Tribune" to be and to do after he was gone what it had been and done under him—

"... the organ of no man however high, no clique or ring however influential, or faction however fanatical or demonstrative, and in all things to follow the line of common sense."

It is no negligible sidelight on Joseph Medill's character that his hero was a man alike the most practical, the most common-sensible and the most visioned in our history—Benjamin Franklin. The statue of Franklin which he gave to Chicago was one of the few luxuries he ever allowed himself.

Characteristic of him were the reversions of his late life when he could enjoy some measure of leisure. He reverted to the farm. He grew up on a farm, and more than a quarter of a century of his early life was

lived among farming people. To a real farm—not to a villa and a lawn—to a real farm with corn and cattle growing on it—he went back.

He worked to the end. That is an exact statement. Nor was it solely the kingly work of mapping policies; much of it was detail, trying to eyesight and voracious of time. He functioned in the “Tribune” office two days after he died, for it was two days after he had breathed his last in San Antonio that the managing editor received from him a bulky envelope of clippings, each one marked “Must, J. M.” That “must” of his was as decisive as a Latin verb on armorial bearings. It meant what it said. It still does.

His life and his work sum themselves up in the good old world “stalwart”—meaning literally “to have a firm foundation”—and that is why his work goes on and on.





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